

LENHARDT BAUER

An Interview Conducted by
Harry Frey
October 3, 1980

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NARRATOR DATA SHEET

October 3, 1980

DATE

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Birthdate: Age 70 Birthplace: Terre Haute, IN

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Occupational history: Terre Haute Attorney

Special interests, activities, etc. Founder and Generalissimo
of the Strawberry Hill Cannoneers

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LENHARDT E. BAUER

Tape 1

October 3, 1980

Office of Bauer, Miller & Bauer - 525 Ohio, Terre Haute, Indiana

INTERVIEWER: Harry Frey

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

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HF: Lenhardt, could we start out with your first political impressions in Terre Haute? How did this all start? Your interest in politics?

BAUER: In retrospect, I believe that Vigo County's traditional place in politics, as far as the public and the press is concerned, is being a "hotbed." There's a real, honest-to-God historical background. It comes from the personality and attitudes of the people who made up Terre Haute in the early days that gave us this history.

When I was a boy in the early 1900's, the two focal points of gathering of interest -- public assembly -- were either the Germania Hall or the K of C [Knights of Columbus] Hall. This town was primarily made up of Irish and German people.

HF: Where were those two places?

BAUER: The Germania Hall was somewhere on the north side of Wabash Avenue just beyond 8th Street [18-20 South 9th Street], and the K of C Hall [was] at the corner of 9th and Ohio [Streets].

Now, when I was still young and just before the outbreak of World War No. I, the Germania Hall burned down and was never rebuilt because of the advent of the war and, subsequently -- immediately subsequently -- the attitude of [the] general public toward German people.

But both of those classes of people -- the Irish and German -- came to this country for the same reason: economic, first and (not necessarily first) politically, second. You can reverse the order one way or the other and you'll still be about fifty-fifty right.

HF: Are you talking about political freedom?

BAUER: Political freedom and economics -- the ability to make and earn an honest dollar and better yourself economically for yourself and your family and your kids. And they really came! The Irish came first.

Tape 1

BAUER: They came and if you look at the old city directories, you'll find either one of two classes of names -- either the Irish or German. They came . . . there were the Burkes and the Carneys and the Cronins and the Clearys and the Clares and the Donnelleys and the Callahans . . . the Duffs, the Parleys, the Fitzgeralds, the Gleasons, the Mooneys, the Murphys, the O'Donnells, the O'Laughlins, the O'Rourkes, the Reillys, and on and on and on. They came, and they came, and they came. They came because they resented Irish dominion-- being put down by the English -- what they called aggression. They didn't like things. And they didn't like the potato famine. They came to better themselves economically and politically, and they were "agin" the government as it existed in their own country.

This same thing is true of the German people. They were Social Democrats. They opposed the monarchy. There were the Austermillers, the Altekruzes, the Bauers, the Bauermeisters, the Brocksmiths, the Brentlingers, the Kataisers, the Klatfelters, the Duenwegs, the Ehrenhardts, the Ehrmanns, the Filbecks, the Trierweilers, the Freitags, the Gerstmeyers, the Graffs, the Hulmans, the Hartmanns, the Herzes, the Heinls, the Mansholts, the Kantmanns, the Krausbeks, the Mayers, the Nagels, the Newharts -- on and on and on. They came, and they came, and they came.

You could take either class of them and tell the story that they do tell about the fellow that was either an Irishman or German -- I don't know which. When he landed at Ellis Island, they said, "Which are you? A Democrat or a Republican?" And he asked, "Who's in power?" And they said, "the Republicans." And he said, "I'm a Democrat. I'm 'agin' the government."

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: They came because they were interested in politics in their home land. They never lost their interest when they came to this country.

HF: How early were you involved personally in politics? Where did you start? As a young man?

BAUER: Yes, Harry, very young, and I started because of the background that I just told you about. Would you believe-- because of my family background being

BAUER: of German ancestry? As you well know, I grew up in a family that was interested in political surroundings. I wouldn't want to steal a line from Abe Lincoln, but I could say [that] whatever I [am] or ever hope to be, I'd owe to my mother. And I had my first baptism in politics in the second campaign of Woodrow Wilson.

HF: Really?

BAUER: I don't think you recall, but history recalls that was [the] "he kept us out of the war" campaign. And they had a district meeting at the K of C Hall -- there on the northwest corner of 6th and Ohio . . . ah, 9th and Ohio Street -- and as I recall, there was a fellow by the name of Sam Ralston running for governor of Indiana. John T. Beasley, Terre Haute's railroad lawyer [and a] big wheel in the Democrat party and the legal profession, was chairman at that meeting. He was well over six feet tall, and somehow or another I . . . six years old -- was deposited on one of the back rows on the stage. He didn't know where I was. He came out to the front of the platform and announced that there would be a reading by Lenhardt E. Bauer. Then he looked all over for me [but he] couldn't find me. I was standing alongside of him, tugging at his coattail. (laughs) He finally found that I was there, and this was, as you must know, well before the days of microphones. And you either had a voice that carried or you didn't. So he finally found me after I pulled on his coattail. He patted me on the head and said, "Here you have Master Bauer." And although that's been many years ago, I still remember what I said. And it only demonstrates that which I previously said, [about] the numerical strength of the Germans and the Irish in this community. This is what I said. Now, you must remember that at this time in 1916 the World War No. I was going full blast. But the United States didn't enter it until 1918. So, to the assembled crowd in the K of C Hall, here it was:

"Here's to sweet Ireland,
The land of my birth
The home of the shamrock
The best land on earth."

Well, needless to say, the Irish tore the roof off the K or C Hall at that particular point.

BAUER: "For the Irish were Irish
When the English weren't much
And they'll still be Irish
When England turns Dutch."

And then both sides of the aisle added to the confusion. After it died:

"For the downfall of England
As all men can see
Is coming so swiftly
We'll soon all be free.
And England next summer
Will walk with a crutch
Surrounded by Germans
And all talking Dutch."

(Laughs)

HF: Well, I must admit. That was some start. Now what from there? How did you stay involved?

BAUER: Well, because of the urging of my mother. Incidentally, I lost my father when I was 13 years old in a hit-and-run automobile accident. [It] couldn't happen today. They never did find out who was responsible.

I have been involved in every campaign since that time. I have been a delegate to the Indiana State convention ever since I was 21 years old to date. Attended many national conventions. [I have] just been interested in politics and, of course, was elected to the legislature in 1933 and 1935.-- re-elected in 1935. So I've always been interested in politics around here and primarily from the standpoint of being interested in the Democratic party.

HF: Who were some of the political leaders in this area over the . . . back in the early days?

BAUER: Well . . .

HF: That stand out in your memory?

BAUER: For years, and until his death, Dick [Richard] Wernecke was the outstanding Democrat leader. By "outstanding" I mean the man was successful on his

BAUER: side. His rival was a man by the name of Thomas F. O'Mara, who was also an attorney. He established a record of being a loser.

I was always kind of happy that when I was admitted to the bar in 1931, Dick Wernecke was my first law partner. So, I had a second start in Democrat politics by having been politically associated with the then leader and successful leader of the party.

There was only one real Republican that amounted to anything. There were others who would be. But he never had any close rival, and that was Nick Filbeck, the president of the Terre Haute Savings Bank.

HF: Now, that's the Filbeck Hotel . . . ?

BAUER: No.

HF: They're connected there?

BAUER: That's a different tribe.

HF: Different tribe?

BAUER: Nick was the president of the . . . oh, they may have been related, but if it was, it was a remote sort of thing. Nick Filbeck was the president of the Terre Haute Savings Bank and remained so for many years. And I might say that back in the early days there was not the complete misunderstanding between party leaders that one might think. They scratched one another's back pretty well.

HF: You mean the Republicans and Democrats . . .

BAUER: And the Democrats. Nick Filbeck and Dick Wernecke had a good understanding, one with the other. When we got to the big Depression when banks were failing just one on one side and one on the other, we had a Secretary of State by the name of Mayer -- Frank Mayer, who's a Democrat. He deposited . . . I don't know how many . . . thousands of dollars in the Terre Haute Savings Bank to protect it against any run on it by the depositors where other banks around here, other banks around here got in trouble . . . and in bad trouble. One failed here on South 6th Street, and the Merchants wasn't in good shape.

HF: Are you saying then that there was more co-operation between the parties for the common good than there is now?

BAUER: I promise you that there was.

HF: That's very interesting.

BAUER: For a long time until the Ku Klux Klan took over, you couldn't elect a Republican around here. And even back in those days when Democrats was carrying everything else, Jim [James] Watson always carried Vigo County.

Jim Watson was a Republican . . . was the Senate majority leader. [He was a] Republican, the senior senator from Indiana. He always carried Vigo County. It wasn't an accident.

I've heard the stories about payoffs and what not, and the West End and the girls and what not, how they were voted . . . Well, they probably were voted, but money didn't change hands. It was a different kind of a quid pro quo. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Jim Watson carried Vigo County. Other Democrats got elected. How'd they do it? They just did it by voting right. Nobody paid off anybody else in money. They just exchanged favors and called it a day, and I think I know whereof I speak.

HF: That applies to the West End and . . . any kind of vice . . .

BAUER: That's right.

HF: . . . around the area?

BAUER: I don't know. I think they had a kind of different point of view about vice . . . in those days. People gambled or they didn't, and nobody really cared a devil of a lot. If somebody wanted to visit the West End, they did it, and if they didn't . . .

HF: They stayed away.

BAUER: They stayed away, and they just kind of let everybody take care of his own business.

HF: Any other people along about that period that stand out in your memory? Politically, I mean.

BAUER: Oh, only those that went to the penitentiary, and I'd rather let the record speak for themselves . . . speak for itself on that. Prohibition bred a real scab on this community.

HF: In what way?

BAUER: Well, there was payoff about that.

HF: Can you be a little more specific?

BAUER: Look at the records of the court. A lot of people went to the penitentiary from this county and even more from up in Vermillion County. It was over the whole Wabash Valley for conspiracy to violate the prohibition laws, and they were nice names, and I'm sure they were nice people. But I knew some of them and -- I knew all of them. But they liked the looks of a dollar, and they took it, and they went to jail. And as far as I'm concerned, I'd just as soon let somebody look through the written record in the media rather than me talk about it.

HF: How about the women's vote when it became when the women got to vote in 1920? What effect did that have on local politics? Any?

BAUER: At that particular time and . . . not until real recently did it have any effect. I think that my recollection and judgment would prompt me to say that the suffrage amendment had no more effect upon the elections at the time than the recent amendment that gave the 18-year-olds the right to vote. They didn't vote anyhow. There were many more women that there were marchers. And the marchers voted, and the rest of them didn't. So, I don't think until women in the recent women's lib movement have really come to realize that they are the factor that they really are in this thing

Now, in the late 19/20's we had . . . I think the first woman candidate for state office that we ever had in Indiana came from Terre Haute -- Mrs. Emma May . . . Miss Emma May. She ran the May Shop, women's apparel, on North 7th Street just this side of Cherry Street on the east side, and

BAUER: she was a clerk in the Supreme and Appellate Court. And she tended to awaken some interest in women voters. Then we came along, and Virginia Jenckes ran for Congress in -- I guess that was 1931 and was elected.

But the real impact of women's voting has only come now here recently, within the last women's lib movement [in the last] six or eight years, ten years.

HF: In other words, at that time there was a close-knit group that were pushing for this, and the rest of the people weren't interested? Is that the idea?

BAUER: That's just about the idea. The marchers far outnumbered the voters.

HF: Going back, you touched on the effect of prohibition to politics. Besides the first people who got into trouble and went to prison that you talked about, what other effects . . . ? Were there any other effects on politics from the advent of prohibition?

BAUER: Well, I don't know whether you can link them hand in hand, but the Ku Klux Klan and prohibition ran neck and neck for evils.

The Ku Klux Klan ran Vigo County with an iron hand for several years in the [19]20's. And, of course, D. C. Stephenson, the Grand Klegal or whatever you want to call him of the Ku Klux Klan, came from Indiana. And, Dr. [Edward Seitz] Shumaker [of] the Anti-Saloon League was the other big wheel at that time. So Dr. Shumaker, of course, was the great prohibitionist. He was the . . . not a woman but he was [on the] governing body of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and all of the Methodists' conclave that fostered prohibition. And D. C. Stephenson and Dr. Shumaker ran the Republican party, and they ran the State of Indiana. D. C. Stephenson has been quoted as saying -- he stole a line from the king of France -- "l'etat, c'est moi" ("The state . . . I am the state.") And he [Stephenson] said he was the state, and he was the state! He ran it and, of course, they all . . . the Klan and the temperance movement all fell into disrespect at the same time.

HF: How long was that that it was . . . that it more or less ruled the political scene?

BAUER: That was from the very early [19]20's until about 1928 . . . '29. It began to disintegrate . . . I've forgotten when the Stephenson . . . was finally convicted. He was . . . either '28 or '29. He was convicted of a murder in . . . [the] murder of Madge Oberholtzer. It was a rape and sex murder. She was an employee of the Republican state administration at the time, and a whole bunch of them went to the penitentiary. McCrea . . . McCrea was convicted of bribery. [Governor] Ed Jackson was freed by pleading the statute of limitations, and everything went to hell in a handbasket as far as that regime was concerned.

HF: That was the start of the demise of the Klan?

BAUER: Of the Klan and prohibition. Al Smith, [a] Catholic with no prayer to get elected for that reason alone, ran on a plank to repeal the 18th Amendment. That opened the door. Roosevelt, later on, was elected on the same ground but [with] a more aggressive plank even than Al Smith had.

HF: Did organized crime play any part in local politics at any time? I know we were always considered during some of those early years as a kind of a haven for gangsters who were in trouble to come down and kind of hide out.

BAUER: Oh, I think that's been overplayed.

HF: Do you?

BAUER: I think that prohibition brought its share of . . . Oh, I don't know. There was only one hoodlum that ever I know of that ever came to Terre Haute and apparently got by here and that was in that prohibition year. [It was] "Blackie" Traum out of St. Louis. He was a bad actor. There is no question about that.

HF: But you think the rest of it's been overplayed, do you?

BAUER: Oh, I think it has been overplayed. Yes.

HF: You touched on the fact that you went to the legislature. I wonder if you'd elaborate on that? Now, that was when?

BAUER: When I was 21 years old, I was nominated for the . . . by the Democratic party for the office of representative from Vigo County and elected in the fall that year. I served in the sessions of 1933 in a special session and 1935, the regular session of 1935, all during the administration of Governor Paul McNutt -- who incidentally was the dean of the law school when I went to Indiana University. So I didn't see an unfamiliar face when I went to his legislature, although I did not see the face of a friend. He and I never did get along. I never liked him, and he never liked me, and that made it a stand-off because it was mutual.

HF: What did you work on primarily in the legislature?

BAUER: Well, in their respective order, one was the repeal of Indiana's bone dry law -- the Wright bone dry law. I ran for the legislature on the proposition that I was going to bring beer back and open the breweries in Indiana. I did that. And I think I can say that, singlehandedly, I stopped Indiana from going into the workmen's compensation business which I don't think has been a success in any . . . up until that time in any state where it's been tried. It still isn't a success where it is tried. I left workmen's compensation in the insurance business as a commercial enterprise, and it's been . . . it's more profitable, and it's just as good. It's better for the workers without the bureaucratic influence that you get in state-operated workmen's compensation. I've always been proud of both of them.

HF: Any other thing stand out in your memory of the legislature? People? Or events? Legislation particularly?

BAUER: Nothing that is of any import.

HF: Newspapers traditionally play large parts in political campaigns. Can you tell us anything about the newspaper's part in past political campaigns locally?

BAUER: Well, I have never underestimated the power of the press. But I think its power, with the advent

BAUER: of television, has decreased substantially. At the time when the press was the source of public information and then later with the advent of radio, still a prime source, its power was immense. Here locally we had two newspapers -- the Terre Haute Star, presumably a Republican publication, and the Terre Haute Tribune, a Democrat publication. But there never was a time that the Tribune was as pro-Democrat as the Terre Haute Star was pro-Republican. Jim Benham was the editor of the Terre Haute Star. Along with his counterpart, Gene Pulliam, who was the editor of the Indianapolis Star, they were pro-pro and vicious to the point that I would almost say they were a menace. They published what they saw fit, editorialized the news that was supposed to be news, and then published their views editorially to supplement it. Neither one of them were any good in my opinion, and although my mother taught me never to speak ill of the dead, I'll say to you, Harry, they don't look any better to me dead than they did alive, and that was not very good.

Pulliam not only had the Indianapolis Star that had good circulation in the Wabash Valley, he also owned . . . I have forgotten how many county seat newspapers and had two radio stations later on to supplement them. He was a bad actor, and always had an eye that had the glint of viciousness in it as far as Vigo County and Terre Haute was concerned. Everything that happened in Terre Haute that would give Terre Haute a bad name, he publicized. No one has ever yet figured just exactly why, except that Terre Haute was a thriving community here on the Wabash, and he was doing one of two things, if not both. Either he was trying to focus an eye of ill will on Terre Haute to minimize the things that were going on in Indianapolis -- and God knows there were plenty. There was more crime in Indianapolis in one small section of town out northeast . . . out northwest of the center of town than there was in the whole of Vigo County. But he wanted to minimize that and say that things were bad over here one way or the other. And he not only did it in the Star but he did it in his radio stations and his other county seat newspapers.

Jim Benham was just a local politician. He wanted to elect the Republican party candidates to office, and he didn't give a hoot nor a hell how he

BAUER: did it. He besmirched a lot of characters that a lot of people think was just kind of unwarranted.

HF: Are there any politicians that you think were outstanding down through the years from Terre Haute and Vigo County? Would you tell us about any of them?

BAUER: Well, I suppose that there've been several that were elected and re-elected and then re-elected and their prime claim to fame would be . . . we would just say they were, like they refer to in the deep South, good ol' boys. Ray Davis was one. He served I think as auditor, treasurer, everything else. Dr. D. M. Ferguson [Sr.], many times the coroner, was another. His cousin, another [Leslie] Ferguson, was the recorder and about everything else in the court house. They were just "good ol' boys." They never cut any great flash. They started out humble and in humble economic circumstances, and they wound up the same way.

I think that probably the most noteworthy of local politicians was Ralph Tucker, who served as mayor of Terre Haute for 20 years. Of course, I knew Ralph ever since we were boys. City clerk, what not. Made up his mind he wanted to be mayor. He started out as a radio man -- "The Man on the Street." Then he wound up right back in the same place, but only after he had been mayor for 20 years. And he was quite a character. Harry, I don't think that you remember how he got to be mayor.

HF: Not exactly.

BAUER: Well, he ran against me!

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: I had been in the army for four years. Wound up in Okinawa and came back just about 35 days before the May primary. I'd been gone for four years and, of course, my practice of law had suffered immeasurably. I decided that I didn't have anything else to lose except the primary, and I just run for mayor. So with 35 days to go, I filed my declaration for candidacy for mayor against Mr. Tucker who had been here all the time for the four years that I was gone. And would you believe it or not, he beat me 147 votes. So Tucker there but for the grace of God and 147 votes went I. And everyone thought that Tucker and I would

BAUER: be embittered enemies from now on because . . . then precinct committeemen and women and workers and whatnot urged that I ask for a recount. But I'd accomplished my purpose. With that kind of a vote everyone knew I was back from the army and ready to practice law so I didn't even remotely entertain asking for a recount or anything else. So he got to be mayor and was elected, re-elected, re-elected, and so on.

HF: He came close to defeat once after that. A little closer than that one with John Ennis, right? In 1951 I think he was beaten . . . that he Tucker won by 54 votes, which was a close one.

BAUER: Well, now I grew up with John Ennis, too. And, of course, in that election, just like every other one, the Republicans elected Tucker even though Ennis was a Republican candidate. The time that Ennis got elected the first time and got his reputation of being such a vote-getter was when he ran against Doc Cusick J. Hubert Cusick, D.D.S. for state representative, and I can't remember who The primary was over, and a Democrat candidate for state representative died. That was Walter Maehling whose name was synonymous with teaching profession, Indiana State University, and just about everything that was good around here. In that particular primary Dr. Olis Jamison, retired member of the faculty at Indiana State, had run second to Walter Maehling. But, lo, out of the clear blue sky a dentist by the name of Dr. Cusick decided that he wanted the committee to name him. He was successful in having himself named, but the stories that circulated about his ability to attain that position over the more popular candidate, Dr. Jamison, were not pretty. And so there were a bunch of Democrats that sat down in a local bar and started "Democrats for Ennis." And they gave . . . the Democrats gave Ennis his reputation for being a vote-getter, because they beat Dr. Cusick and elected Ennis. He never was really the real vote-getter that he had the reputation for being that the Democrats gave to him. And if it hadn't have been for the Republicans, Tucker could not have been mayor for as many years as he was. And you know when you get right down to it, Tucker was a good mayor. And if he wasn't, what was there about him that was bad?

HF: You feel that over the years when a man's in office 20 years, a lot of things are said about him possibly just because he's been there that long, isn't that right?

BAUER: Well, of course. Jim Watson said every time he appointed a postmaster, he made seven enemies and one ingrate, and that isn't just too idle a statement. Every time Tucker appointed a member to the fire or police department, he made at least three or four people unhappy, because they didn't get the appointment. And sometimes the loyalty of those that you do something for is to be doubted. I don't think it's an accident that if you say that for years people have been saying that if you feed a dog, he'll lick your hand and brush you; if you feed a man, he'll bite your hand. I didn't make that story up. People have been saying that for years, so there must be something to it.

So after you've been mayor for 20 years, if you just move, you're bound to step on somebody's toes one way or another. And with Republican editors like Jim Benham, who had a part of it, and everybody else, [it] hits you. They tried year after year to indict Tucker for something including his income tax, and he came up clean as a hound's tooth every time. And I don't think that there's any public official that more effort was made to discredit than there was Tucker. But yet that discredit never came, and although he beat me, I'm kinda glad he did. I'm still around. He isn't. So I haven't had all the worries, and life's been good to me.

HF: You feel like he was a good mayor?

BAUER: I don't think there's any question about it. If he'd been a bad mayor, he couldn't have been elected . . . he couldn't have been re-elected three times.

HF: How about his bid for governor? I think it was in 1956 he made a bid for governor. What kind of a chance did he have? How did that work out?

BAUER: Well, when you're a candidate in an election, you've got as much chance, I suppose, as anybody has -- if you're just a candidate. But Tucker, in my opinion, although when he was a candidate -- I supported him

BAUER: to the hilt -- was just a little too flamboyant. He was a little too liberal -- little too flashy -- to attract conservative majority vote in the State of Indiana. I think he probably . . . he had the ability . . . probably could have been a good governor. I think if he made any mistakes as governor, they'd be honest mistakes. Tucker was not a dishonest man, but he just was . . . I don't know any better way to put it . . . just a little too flashy. Just a little too flamboyant for the conservative State of Indiana.

HF: You had a law partner that was quite active in politics also -- Leonard Kincade . . .

BAUER: Very active.

HF: Would you tell us something about him . . . your association with him?

BAUER: Well, Leonard Kincade and I started out being enemies and I mean, bitter. And then along came an election in 1940. I ran for Congress in this Sixth Congressional District of Indiana, and he ran for circuit judge. There was no alliance between our candidacies in any way, shape, or form. But for some reason or another, we both attracted the same political enemies.. One of them was Joe Duffy, the mayor of Terre Haute, who was a mentor of the . . . at that particular time, successful Thomas F. O'Mara that I spoke about a while ago.

In the meantime, Dick Wernecke was dead, and Tom had his one hour of glory. Duffy was elected, and he got Duffy's ear. And I had had Tom O'Mara as an enemy from the time of my first day of partnership with Dick Wernecke. So between the mayor and Tom, they did everything to discredit Leonard Kincade and me.

They published a paper run by a woman that lived here in Terre Haute by the name of Wabash Valley Post -- the paper, Wabash Valley Post. And they took over its publication, and week after week they blasted Leonard and they blasted me. I know a little as I've been through this.

BAUER: I guess it's been said that politics makes strange bedfellows. It did as far as Leonard and I were concerned. They put us in bed together.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: Not because I wanted it! Nor not because he wanted it! We had no place else to go. So, on the night before the primary . . . I'm not just sure how it all came about, but as far as I know, Terre Haute had its first introduction to offset printing, which is a process by which you just take pictures of type and then reproduce it from a plate like you would a photograph.

Well, there appeared on the night before the primary a copy of the Wabash Valley Post. The whole edition which was a folded sheet -- four pages -- was all duplicating of items that had been clipped from the previous paper and put together again with a two-column-wide apology on the front page in which the editor of the Wabash Valley Post apologized to the public, Mr. Kincade, and to me, setting forth that she had turned over the editorial policy of her paper to Mr. O'Mara for the primary, and that she was sorry about all the untrue things and the things that they'd said about us. She wanted to take them all back and be sure that the people of the Valley would vote for us.

Well, that night at six o'clock on the Tuesday news . . . what was the editorial with the mustache? Drew . . . Lowell Thomas? Lowell Thomas on his six o'clock regular evening broadcast told a story, not only to Vigo County but to the nation, that out in Terre Haute in Vigo County, Indiana, two politicians that had been lied about during the primary apologized to themselves. (laughs)

The next morning Leonard and I got sued for a hundred thousand dollars, saying that the paper was a forgery. I don't know how they ever got that idea. But anyhow, that was back in the days when the sheriff didn't deliver a copy of the complaint when he delivered the summons -- you had to go down and pick it up. So I was bustin' with curiosity to see what lawyer had drawn that complaint. So I scurried down to the Clerk's office and got a copy of the complaint and,

BAUER: lo and behold, no lawyer had drawn it. She had acted as her own attorney. So I went back to the office, and I drafted a motion to make more specific and to strike certain parts of the complaint and set it for oral argument.

About a week later, I went down on the date set for the oral argument, and looked, and there she sat out in the courtroom on the front row. I waited and I waited until the appointed hour for an attorney to show up to consult with her and none did. So I went back and asked her who her attorney was. She said she didn't have one. She was her own attorney.

Well, all the courthouse -- the people down there, you know, are all political employees, appointees -- had their eyeballs screwed on that lawsuit that morning. There was no question about that. So I suggested to her that we were quite prominent in not just a bird's-eye view, but a general view of everybody that was interested in our lawsuit, and didn't she think that maybe we ought to go someplace else and talk about it. I suggested we come down to our office -- Bauer and Kincade's office. She agreed, and that was the coldest walk I ever had in my life. That was from the courthouse back to the office down at 8th and Ohio Street.

We got there, and we talked it over Well, to make a long story short, I settled that lawsuit for a hundred dollars. And that was a hundred thousand dollar lawsuit. She told the court that she had re-examined the facts and found out that she was mistaken, and she wanted to dismiss her lawsuit. Matter of fact, she was sorry about the whole thing.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: So . . . a fellow by the name of Nixon out in California made a speech and said, "I'm not a crook." But hell, I got a judgment of court that says I'm not.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: It was dismissed.

But like I said, they put us in bed together and to make a long story short, O'Mara was of that

BAUER: breed of Democrats -- and we still have some of them -- that if they don't get what they want in the primary, they vote the Republican ticket in the fall.

So, although Mr. Kincade and I -- I for Congress and he for circuit judge -- won in that primary election, we got beat in the fall election so we had no place else to go, so we formed our partnership. As I say, they put us in bed together.

So, having learned the power of the press and having learned some of the things that can be done with the press, we acquired the policy of another paper -- the East Side Reporter. Now you must remember we had odd-year elections in the city elections. So Mr. Duffy, who had taken such a keen interest in our campaigns, became the object of our affections. He had to run the next time.

Now, I've already told you that the Dutch and the Irish play a great part in Democrat politics. We needed a good honest-to-God, redblooded Irishman to run against Joseph P. Duffy -- Joseph Patrick Duffy -- who was a counterfeit Irishman. He was what the Irish refer to as a left-hander. He was a good Mason.

So we got Robert "Honeyboy" Welch as a candidate. "Honeyboy" Welch was a good union man. He belonged to the typographical union, worked for the Terre Haute Tribune. The Welch name is a synonym for Irish in the faith. This guy -- he had a brother who was chief of detectives -- had another brother [who was] captain on the fire department. They were good Irish.

So we started early. And that was the campaign that was won by bum poetry. Are you sure you want to hear about it?

HF: Sure. (Laughs)

BAUER: Well, the only reason I presume to tell you is that a fellow I knew, but I could never say he was a friend of mine, was the editor of the Indianapolis News. That was Mickey McCarty. He was the editor of the News and pro-Republican. He didn't go to Democrat editorial association meetings or places where I circulated, but I knew him, and I knew him very well on a friendly basis. He was a well-known

BAUER: journalist, ran a good, good sheet over there in the Indianapolis News and later on, a rather brilliant columnist. He was a big wheel in the Sigma Delta . . .

HF: Sigma Delta Chi?

BAUER: Sigma Delta Chi, a journalistic fraternity, and he was a guest lecturer at Indiana University and Indiana State University and here and there on the aspects of journalism. And he made this poetry the subject of one of his lectures. And although Mickey and I didn't kneel at the same political altar, he and I agreed on one thing. I have always believed that if you thump the tub, pound the rostrum, kick the splinters out of the podium, and raised just unsure hell, people are inclined to say, "That's just politics."

But once you start to laugh at a man that's in public office, there is no defense against it. When people start to snicker at you, you're done.

So there was enough to talk about while Duffy was mayor -- during his administration [1940-44]. We had two horse books in Terre Haute. I guess you know what a horse book is, where illegal betting is carried on on horse races and other sporting events. Or elections even! One of them belonged to Walter Roach down on Wabash Avenue between 8th and 9th Street on the south side. Another was right at 7th Street and Wabash Avenue above Candelori's restaurant. They ran wide open.

They let the city garbage contract to Joe Candelori -- that owned the restaurant below the horse book -- on the high bid. There were several lawsuits pending about that. About the same time, we had a daylight robbery of a building and loan association at the northwest corner of 7th and Ohio Street -- right in the heart of town. True or not true, I don't know, the rumor circulated that if you wanted to get an appointment on either the street or fire department, you had to make a campaign contribution in the amount of \$300. Walter Roach, that ran the bookie joint, lived right across the street from Joe Duffy. I've forgotten the name of the street -- it's the first block south of College Cruft. Both of them lived on the west side of the street. Walter lived at 1201 South 9th Street. Duffy lived at the last house [1133 South 9th Street]

BAUER: on the end of the block just north of him. Everybody in Terre Haute . . . this is back during still bad times and nobody was getting their streets fixed, but they blacktopped the east-west street between their two houses. And then along came the time just before Halloween when somebody broke into the City Clerk's office at the City Hall -- which is just next door to the Police Chief's office -- and took the hinges off the safe and stole the money out of the Clerk's office. Everybody took a lie detector test that was in the headquarters at the time except the mayor himself -- and that was made subject to comment.

And, oh, there were so many things and Oh, and then at the same time the money disappeared at the courthouse, a family came down from Chicago where by will one of their predecessors had left a thousand dollars to the cemetery fund for the permanent upkeep of their grave out at Highland Lawn Cemetery. When they came down there, they couldn't find the grave for the weeds and the cans and the beer bottles that were on top of it and went down to City Hall to find out what happened. They couldn't even find a record of the fund, that any payment had ever been made. Oh, there was quite a stink about it.

So we had some things to talk about. So we started early in December. One of the things that Mickey McCarty talked about when he read his lecture to the classes that came to hear them was this:

'Tis said that on the avenue called Wabash
in the center of the town
There's a stairway on the south side many
feet go up and down.
To and from a peekhole doorway where the
windows shuttered tight
Bar from view the golden sunshine and
keep those within from sight.

There amid racing forms and dope sheets,
hidden from the light of day,
In the dim of foul cigar smoke there,
the suckers lose their pay.

BAUER: Oh, of course, it's quite illegal,
but so it goes in Terre Haute,
And if you pay this den a visit,
there's another thing you'll note.

It will be the smell of garbage coming
from the floor below.
City garbage, let on contract, to the
boys who're in the know.
A contract fraught with lawsuits
charging fraud in what they did,
Those sacred city fathers and the
man with highest bid.

Thereby in the shuttered windows and
behind the peekhole door
There's a question for the voters
as to which one smells the more.
City garbage? Bookie stable? The
question's moot methinks.
For no matter how you whiff it,
confidentially, it stinks!

So that was one for trial and error.

HF: That was printed in the Advertiser-Reporter.

BAUER: Well, I tell you what happened. At first
they . . . with this first one there was limited
circulation. It just went to the seventh ward.
But some people thought it was amusing, and they
started to ask questions. "Hey, did you read
that . . . ?" You know, and they'd try to tell
something about it.

Well, it got to be . . . it eventually got to
the place -- and not eventually, but right shortly . . .
the Advertiser-Reporter had citywide circulation, and
one of the things that made it so -- I probably should
explain. Whenever . . . in these poems from then on
and later whenever we referred to the mayor, we
always spelled it "m-a-r-e" like a female horse.

So the next one was:

Dear mare:

I've been a loyal backer of your effort
now for years
And the way the folks are talkin' almost
moves me plumb to tears.

BAUER: For when they ask me questions 'bout
these things here today,
I can't seem to find no answers, and
I don't know what to say.
So I'm writin' you this letter so I'm
sure that you will know,
And, mare, I hope you tell me that the
talk in town ain't so.
Won't you tell me what you tell 'em all
about the street car sale,
And what happened to the iron when they
took up all the rail?
And while we're on the subject, every-
body's pokin' fun,
Now, tell me, is it your fault that the
buses seldom run?
And with streets as rough as thunder,
I'd really like to know,
Have you got your side street blacktopped?
Won't you tell me it ain't so?
When the city safes were pilfered and
they questioned all the rest,
Who was the only one that ducked the
lie detector test?
And, mare, there's one more question and
I hope it won't seem rash,
But to get on the department, does it
cost three hundred cash?
And to put to rest the rumor that across
the street from you
Lives the guy that runs the horse book,
won't you tell me it ain't true?
I've tried my best to tell 'em that the
west end neon light
Really can't be your fault, 'cause you
don't get out at nights.
But they've surely got me puzzled, and
I don't know what to think
When they say, "There's more than garbage
around her that'll stink."
But the rumor that has shook me as the
very hardest blow
Was that you're gonna run again,
oh, tell us it ain't so.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: Well, about that west end. They really blossomed
out down there in the west end. They actually did

BAUER: have houses of prostitution. To identify themselves [they] had their street number signs in neon. That was the reference there.

[Of] course, you must remember that at the same time that World War No. II was on the way. We weren't in it yet, but it was just around the corner. We had defense contracts being let all over the country at various towns, and compulsory military service was on the books, and people were being drafted. And so, this is the one then, the day after that followed:

Some folks are never satisfied to look
about 'em here at home.
They think to find excitement that a
feller's gotta roam
Into foreign lands and climates and to
travel all around.
But just amongst us girls, my friend,
this ain't no one-horse town.

You can talk of famous cities like
Reno famed for bet,
But you won't have to travel to find
craps, poker and roulette.
And the cribs of old New Orleans are
among the touted sights,
But we got houses numbered with stream-
lined neon lights.

Take Chicago and Miami, too, we ain't
half the size of them.
At that, we got two racetracks that
are runnin' on the stem.
We've a hardy population that can take
it so it seems.
The kids they skip their lunches just
to play the slot machines.

When they talk about their highways,
we can put 'em all to scorn,
We've smeared so darned much blacktop
they ain't room to plant no corn.

We've a tax rate that's a daisy and it
sure cost lots of bucks,
But don't we get our garbage hauled in
super fancy trucks?

BAUER: So before you're pessimistic and
 think Terre Haute is slack
 And think about the where you been and
 long that you were back,
 Don't strike for greener pastures, just
 take a look around
 For just amongst us girls, my friend,
 this ain't no one-horse town.

Now, the thing that prompted the line in there about the slot machines -- they were pretty ripe around Terre Haute, too . . . they had a lunch stand -- and it still existed a few years ago -- right across from Woodrow Wilson High School out on Poplar Street where all the kids went over to lunch. And they had one whole bank of slot machines in there, and the kids from Woodrow Wilson were going over there and playing the slot machines until somebody raised so much hell about it that they shut that off, and it got some news reports, and so that was what prompted the thing.

I told you Walter Roach ran the horse book and had the place where they went down on Wabash Avenue. Well, you know the riding song of Pancho Villa was "La Cucaracha," the roach. And back 30 years ago, there were a lot of people that still remembered about Pancho Villa, although today probably there'd be few that know anything about him. But anyhow, we said:

In the better days for bandits in the
hills of Mexico,
When Pancho and his horsemen gave the
natives quite a show,
Ran their horses through the city,
showed their horse dust to the law,
Using no discrimination, just robbed
everyone they saw.
Swept aside all sign of order that
might on their will encroach,
Just ridin' and a-singin' "La Cucaracha,"
the roach.

'Course I ain't so smart at history
but the little that I've read
I know from what I see about that
bandits ain't all dead.
We've a modern combination . . .

BAUER: . . . And if I inserted the "combination," it was the name of Walter Roach's cigar store.

We've a modern combination that is
very much alive
Of bandits running horses every afternoon
'til five.
And the natives lose their pesos, no sum
too small to poach,
If they can't beat the horses of
La Cucaracha, the roach.

Pancho lasted in his day for quite a
goodly spell,
But one thing about being outlaws is
that they don't wear so well.
And the small fry seek the timber just
as soon as leaders hang,
So you can bet the next election will
clean up the whole shebang.
For the voters of the city can scarcely
expect reproach
When they object to sleeping with
La Cucaracha, the roach.

HF: This was quite a campaign, wasn't it?

BAUER: Well, I can tell you that the time rapidly came when housewives were standing on their front porch awaiting the delivery of the Advertiser-Reporter to see what the hell it had to say next.

HF: What the next poem was.

BAUER: This is known as "Scratched," and once again bearing in mind that Mayor is m-a-r-e and the mare was Tom O'Mara's protege. [The] title of this was "Scratched."

Some towns are bubblin' over with talk
of war and such
About the big defense plants, the payrolls
and how much.
But we ain't buildin' buildings but we're
surely havin' fun,
For the biggest news in Terre Haute is
how the horses run.

BAUER: The Reds may hold to Moscow and the
 R.A.F. bomb Rome,
 But the news has little interest to
 the readers here at home.
 We skip the front page over and hurry
 right on past
 We have to know 'fore post time if the
 track is slow or fast.
 From shine boy to his honor with their
 dope sheet under arm,
 You'll find 'em eating luncheon with
 the daily racing form.
 We got no time to worry 'bout other
 people's trouble,
 We're busy now figuring who will win
 the daily double.
 But the biggest race is coming, with
 new entries every day,
 Has got everybody talkin' about the
 second week next May.
 'Course we can't name the winner,
 reading future ain't our boast,
 But the bettin' is that Tom's mare
 will be scratched at the post.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: I think probably the most talked of of all
 the sequence was the one that happened just before
 Halloween when the money disappeared from the vault
 in the city clerk's office, and they couldn't find
 the cemetery fund. And this was entitled "The
 Ghost Story."

 Some folks don't believe in haunts and
 think that ghosts don't walk
 Just kid about the howling, make out
 it's all just talk.
 Before you get too certain and think
 for sure you know
 Some funny things have happened, and
 you can't deny that's so.

 Why, once there was a feller who when
 his life was ended
 Just wanted to always know his grave
 was clean and tended.
 So he wrote a will and fixed it that
 the city got the dough --
 An even thousand dollars just to rake
 and clean and mow.

BAUER: And then you know what happened?
 That fund just disappeared
 And the weeds begun to grow around
 as he had always feared.
 'Til the place was all confusion and
 was such an awful sight
 That it roused his tidy spirit and he
 couldn't rest at night.

 And it made him mad all over, as you
 can be sure it would,
 For he knowed that robbin' graves
 ain't looked upon so good.
 So he visited the skeletons in the
 closets at the hall,
 And though they scare most livin'
 folks, he didn't mind at all.

 And the next thing that they knowed
 down at the city hall
 Was money put away at night, they
 couldn't find at all.
 For it ain't hard for a spirit to
 slip in through a crack
 And that's exactly what he done to
 get his money back.

 Though they couldn't understand it
 when the locks was boarded tight,
 'Twas a ghost that took that dough
 that disappeared at night.
 Now perhaps you won't believe it, but
 there's one thing you can bet,
 If there's a better explanation, the
 Mayor ain't told it yet.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: So, that's a part of it -- not all of it, and
 it . . .

HF: What happened then? What happened?

BAUER: Well, one thing more happened. I am somewhat
 a little reluctant to tell it. It could be judged
 to be on the vulgar side. But, hell, Harry, there
 ain't nobody going to listen to this tape but us
 girls anyhow, so we just as well tell it.

BAUER: First of all, everybody knows what a bumper sticker is these days and probably will from now into the future. But I can remember when there wasn't such a thing. But back in that time 40 years ago that campaign gave birth to, and as far as I know it died in the same campaign, and we affectionately called it a "potty poster." It was a little campaign item that went up into every public potty that there was in the city of Terre Haute. There was a group of young unemployed coal miners in those not-too-prosperous days up in Twelve Points known as Roberts Wrecking Crew. And they divided up the city into wards and districts for distribution of the poster.

Now the poster was just a little more on the square side than the campaign card that everyone is familiar with. But it had a portrait of His Honor, the Mayor -- his campaign card portrait -- smiling. And next to it, a small poem. Now this poster was almost square and just big enough to fit in the palm of your hand. This was in days before self-adhesives. You had to lick the glue, and they was just about wide enough that you could give it a good quick swipe or two with the tongue and cover the whole glue thing, so held in the palm of the hand all you had to do is take it and slap it, and you'd have it up against either the seat that was raised or the tank on the potty.

And they went through Terre Haute from one end to the other, and every potty user on the raised lid had the poster and there was the Mayor smiling through that seat like a horse with his head stuck through a collar, smiling out, and on it it had the words:

If you're constipated and cannot pass
Just take a look at this horse's ---.

HF: (Laughs)

BAUER: Now, there you have it. That was the coup de grace.

But I think at first blush they backed up and thought about it the first time. Then they snickered the second time, and by the third time, the whole damned town laughed aloud. And I think that was the coup de grace.

HF: That finished it?

BAUER: That finished it except for the result. The end result was that "Honeyboy" Welch beat the Mayor for renomination, and that's pretty tough to do when you beat anybody for renomination. But, of course, the ultimate result was the same again. They're still a bunch of fair weather Democrats. When they get what they want in the primary, fine; if they don't get what they want, they vote the Republican ticket so they all voted against "Honeyboy" Welch and elected Vern McMillan mayor in the fall.

HF: Any reflections or comparisons come to mind between politics in those days and politics present?

BAUER: Yeah. They had some organization in those days. It was a . . . they had discipline. They had people who were Democrats because they were Democrats and knew why, and there were people who were Republicans and knew why they were. They had different philosophies. Today our government locally and almost nationally is a conglomerate of splinter groups. One issue partisan. . . They're for ERAers -- they're agin ERA, and that's the only thing they know about.

They're for abortion or they're against abortion. And that's all they know about!

They're for segregation or they're against segregation. They're for busing or they're against busing. They're . . . one-liners. There's no great cohesive thing in politics like there was at one time, in my opinion.

We're a nation of agnostics. The majority of the present-day voters are people who grew up and were nurtured in an unpopular war in Vietnam. They are children of Watergate. They don't believe in anything. We've not only had Watergate, but we've got a deluge of bribetakers and sex maniacs and whatnot in Congress -- in the seats of government. There's a great distrust in government. In my time, when I was young, it was honorable to hold public office. An officeholder, a public servant was a man that had respect. When he went to the church sociable or wherever he went, he was greeted affably. Even if he didn't belong to your party, he was still a man

BAUER: that was the choice of the people and was looked upon with respect and treated with honor. And that isn't true any more. We're agnostics, people who don't believe anything. Apathy. What difference does it make whether I vote? They won't count 'em anyhow -- which is phony and not right. This recent election recount that we just went through is not the fault of the voters. It's the fault of the people on election boards that wouldn't take time to listen just how they were supposed to do the job. It's a rotten shame! But there's a lot of difference between the time of Dick Wernecke and Nick Pilbeck and now.

HF: How do you feel about the future? Are you a pessimist or an optimist in politics? Are we going to get better?

BAUER: Yeah. (laughs) It can't get a helluva lot worse. (laughs) We're bound to get better. We just have to. We have too much at stake.

HF: Can you see any signs of it?

BAUER: I've had hopes. I think that we're just going to have to do something about those who feel that the bureaucracy in which we live is just getting too top-heavy. Government can't do everything for us, and someone is going to have to get back to the fundamental idea that you just can't write laws to protect damn fools. I think that we're going to have to, to a certain degree, go back to the basic law of caveat emptor -- let the buyer beware and leave to every fool his own folly.

An energetic, willing and capable blue-collar class can't take on the burden of supporting those who are unwilling and don't want to help themselves, who would rather draw rocking chair pay than work if they had the chance. And there are plenty . . . plenty of civic enterprises that are worthwhile that those that can't find employment could readily take up their good time to perform for the general good, rather than just have the strength to go to the mailbox to cash their unemployment checks. Now if this is treason, by God, make the most of it!

END OF TAPE

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